

Red scarf connects father, son

BY LENA T. KING

Air Force Special Operations
Command Public Affairs

The commandant of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School, Hurlburt Field, Fla., traveled to Kirtland AFB to welcome the latest flight engineers into the Air Force.

What made the ceremony more significant for Col. Michael Damron is the fact that one of the newest engineers is his oldest son, Staff Sgt. Brian Damron. Additionally, Sergeant Damron will be heading to the 20th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field—a unit his father first flew with in 1980 when the unit first stood up.

A command pilot, Colonel Damron brought his family to Hurlburt Field in 1980, so Sergeant Damron's assignment to the 20th Spe-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Laura Holzer

Staff Sgt. Brian Damron and his father, Col. Michael Damron, pose in front of an MH-53 Pave Low at Kirtland AFB, N.M. Sergeant Damron is a recent graduate of the Basic Helicopter Flight Engineer Training School. His father, the commandant of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School, Hurlburt Field, Fla., is a Pave Low command pilot with more than 4,800 flying hours.

of MH-53 flight crews.

"It was so exciting having my dad 'scarf' me," said Sergeant Damron. "Getting this scarf is what marks you as an aircrew member. It is a reminder that when the chips are down, you will not leave anyone behind."

Sergeant Damron entered the Air Force hoping to follow in his father's footsteps as an MH-53 crewmember, but there were no flying slots for first term Airmen, so he became a crew chief. At the first opportunity, he cross-trained to become a flight engineer.

"I like what the flight engineer does and its job. It's such a unique position with a lot of responsibility," said Sergeant Damron.

According to the colonel, the road to becoming a flight engineer wasn't an easy one.

"It's the hardest flight engineering school in the Air Force. The enlisted guys have to be twice as smart as the pilots," said the colonel, who has more than 4,800 flying hours in Air Force helicopters, including the MH53 Pave Low.

The school is nine months long and the sergeant initially had to overcome severe airsickness.

"He has a great attitude about it," said his father. "He never let that stop him. He went out to Sheppard [AFB, Texas] to participate in a program designed to help you overcome airsickness, and he beat it."

Sergeant Damron attributes his success to his father.

"He taught me how to balance work and family. (My dad) has been such a big role model. I grew up watching him and grew up around this air-

craft. I saw a seven-ship formation when I was five years old and knew that this is what I wanted to do."

Although the scarfing ceremony had not been implemented at the technical school when Colonel Damron was the commandant, he still cherishes the significance of how the scarf ties each 53-aircrew member together.

"The special thing about this tradition is that regardless of rank, every pilot and flight crew member wears the same scarf," said Colonel Damron.

There are several stories about how the red scarf became a tradition with MH-53 crewmembers. Some believe the scarf is a tribute to all MH-53 crewmembers who died saving the lives of others—the red symbolizing the blood that was shed. The most widely accepted explanation stems from a Cold War era exercise the 20th and 21st Special Operations Squadrons participated in during the late 1970's.

According to former 551st Special Operations Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Tim Leahy, Pave Low pilots posed as Soviet aggressors and wore make-shift red scarves cut from Officer's Club tablecloths to distinguish them as such. Maintainers soon followed suit, hanging red cloths from poles and fixing them to the backs of "follow me" trucks to welcome the crews home after a victory. This practice ignited esprit de corp among the helicopter aircrews and was accepted as a sign of the Pave Low brotherhood.

"The scarfing ceremony is much like a Navy Seal getting his trident or a pararescueman getting his beret. It's the culmination of all the hard work, dedication and training. You are officially part of the Pave Low team," said Lt. Col. Lance Bodine, the current commander of the 551st Special Operations Squadron.

For Sergeant Damron, it holds another meaning much closer to his heart. It represents a lasting impression left by a father on a son.

"He's the reason why I'm here and I'm glad he was here to do this."

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cial Operations Squadron brings him back to familiar territory.

Attending technical school in the 551st Special Operations Squadron, Kirtland AFB was also familiar ground for young Damron—his father served as the commandant for the Basic Helicopter Flight Engineer Training School in 1990.

The scarfing ceremony was especially meaningful for the sergeant who now wears the same scarf his father has worn all his life. Colonel Damron proudly made the trip to Kirtland AFB to personally present his son with the crimson scarf worn only by members

MOVIES

Tonight

7 p.m.

From Justin to Kelly

Kelly Clarkson, Justin Guarini

Spring break in Miami—it's where surf-drenched guys cruise girls in bikinis and raucous parties rule day and night.

Rated PG (thematic elements, sensuality and brief language) 82 minutes

9:30 p.m.

The Hulk

Eric Bana, Jennifer Connelly

In this adaptation of the long-running Marvel comic "The Incredible Hulk," research scientist Dr. Bruce Banner's failed experiments cause him to mutate into a monstrously powerful and savage green-skinned behemoth whenever he loses control of his emotions.

Rated PG-13 (sci-fi action violence, disturbing images and partial nudity) 138 minutes

Tomorrow

7 p.m.

28 Days Later... The Days are Numbered

Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris

A powerful virus escapes from a British research facility. Transmitted in a drop of blood and devastating within seconds, the virus locks those infected into a permanent state of murderous rage.

Within 28 days the country is overwhelmed and a handful of survivors begin their attempts to salvage a future, little realizing that the deadly virus is not the only

thing that threatens them.

Rated R (strong violence and gore, language and nudity) 113 minutes

Aug. 10

7 p.m.

Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle

Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu

Natalie, Dylan and Alex, three glamorous, tough-as-nails, investigative agents—who work for the Charles Townsend Detective Agency—are sent undercover to retrieve two missing jewelry bands.

These are no ordinary wedding rings. They contain valuable information that reveals the new identities of every person in the FBI's Witness Protection Program.

After five of the program's participants turn up dead, only the Angels can stop the perpetrator, using their expertise as masters of disguise, espionage and martial arts.

Rated PG-13 (action violence, sensuality, language and innuendo) 119 minutes

Aug. 11, 12, 13,
14 Closed

Aug. 15

7 p.m.

Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle, PG-13

9:30 p.m.

28 Days Later ... The Days are Numbered, R



Courtesy photo

Eagle Scout Michael Robert McEniry receives a Certificate of Commendation from Rio Rancho Mayor Jim Owen during a court of honor.

Family member achieves Eagle Scout

Michael Robert McEniry achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. The Rio Rancho Mid-High School freshman this fall is the son of Lt. Col. Robert F. McEniry, Office of Aerospace Studies, and Diane E. McEniry.

The Eagle Scout recognition was presented to Michael in a court of honor that included presentation of the Certificate of Commendation by Rio Rancho Mayor Jim Owen and a flag ceremony by the Kirtland AFB Honor Guard.

For his Eagle Scout project, Michael collected, catalogued and shelved more than 1,500 books for the library at his new school. The school that opened August 2002 was saved at

least \$10,000 and expanded its collection through his efforts.

The former Soap Box Derby racer will attend Rio Rancho Mid High this school year and has a 4.0 grade point average. He placed third in the June 2002 Rio Rancho All-American Soap Box Derby and is an avid follower of NASCAR. His scoutmaster is Moses Winston of Boy Scout Troop 741. Among McEniry's accomplishments in the scouting are service as troop quartermaster, den chief, troop guide, assistant senior patrol leader and senior patrol leader. He has completed 22 merit badges and has earned his den chief service award.

COMMAND TV CHANNEL 95

7 a.m. Reveille (Monday-Friday)
8 a.m. Air Force News
9 a.m. Army Newswatch
10 a.m. Navy Marine Corps News
1 p.m. Terrorism Threat Conditions
2 p.m. Veterans Views and News
3 p.m. Air Force News
4 p.m. Retreat (Monday-Friday)
5 p.m. Army Newswatch

6 p.m. Navy Marine Corps News
10 p.m. Terrorism Threat Conditions
11 p.m. Veterans Views and News
1 a.m. Air Force News
2 a.m. Army Newswatch
3 a.m. Navy Marine Corps News
4 a.m. Terrorism Threat Conditions
6 a.m. Veterans Views and News